Media Release

YCSRT Backcountry 'Swift Water Team' takes first place in Competition
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This story was submitted by Dan Hughart of YCSRT Swift Water team and provides details on the events that tested the team. Sheriff Mascher is very proud of their effort resulting in the 1st place win. This team has proven invaluable in the recent past regarding river and flooding based rescue operations.

On Saturday, June 4, 2016, members of the Backcountry Unit from the Yavapai County Search and Rescue Team participated in the 15th annual Swift Water Expo. This event is a statewide swift water rescue competition sponsored by the Arizona Hiking Shack and Arizona Department of Public Safety. The event was held at Saguaro Lake Ranch in Mesa, Arizona, and involved teams representing 6 agencies from throughout the state. The Backcountry Unit 'swam' away with first place, winning the event for the 3rd time in 5 attempts.

The competition consisted of 6 different stations involving the following scenarios-

•   Strong Swimmer and Knot tying- In this event, each member swam through river current, over one buoy and back around another, and continued to the other side to rescue a stranded subject. They then had to swim back with the subject to safety. Once the member completed the swim, they had to run up a sandy hill to a knot tying station and successfully tie 8 knots. Time limit: 25 minutes

•   Kayak Rescue- In this event - Each member paddled a kayak around 4 buoys downstream, then cross the river and pick up stranded subject using the kayak. The member then paddled around the same buoys, going up stream, and return. Time limit: 30 minutes

•   Throw Bag rescue aids - In this event, each member had 3 minutes to make as many successful throws of a throw bag. The targets were hula hoops at distances of 20, 30, 40, 50, 60 and 70 feet, with different points awarded for each distance.

•   Tethered Strong Swimmer - In this event, each member had to swim across the river and then swim a subject back. Once the subject and rescuer passed a buoy in the river, another team member conducted a tethered swimmer rescue by swimming out while tethered by rope, grabbing hold of the rescuer and the subject while being pulled to shore.

•   Boat Handling/Team boating - In this event, there were 4 subjects needing rescue with members utilizing an inflatable boat. The team paddled the boat through a buoy course, then across to bring back to subjects one at a time. After all subjects were back safely, one injured subject had to be raised up a steep angle bank utilizing a rope system. Because the team successfully completed the event in less than 20 minutes, they were given a bonus round to earn more points. This consisted of completing the buoy course again.

•   Scenario - This event evaluated the team's ability to conduct a rescue in moving water. The team was given no information about the rescue scene and had to manage it appropriately. The clock was started and the team went to work. They discovered there were 2 submerged cars in the river with 2 subjects on top of each vehicle. The team utilized a tethered inflatable boat to conduct the rescue. During the rescue, one of the subjects was swept off the top of the car and the team successfully deployed a throw bag to the subject and pulled her into the boat. Also during the rescue, a 5th subject (concerned citizen) entered the water in an attempt to help others and was swept away by the current. The team sent a tethered strong swimmer, who successfully rescued this subject and both were pulled back to shore. The Backcountry Unit rescued all 5 subjects in under 7 minutes!

The Backcountry Unit would like to thank the Arizona Hiking Shack and AZ Department of Public safety for putting on this great training opportunity.   They would also like to thank all the donors and the Yavapai County Sheriff's office for their continued support.

The Backcountry Unit is an all-volunteer technical rescue team who rely on grants and donations from citizens like you. They are also looking for new people to join the team. For more information on donating or to become a member, please visit YCSRT.org.

Citizens can contact the Yavapai County Sheriff's Office with information or questions at 928-771-3260 or the YCSO website:
www.ycsoaz.gov